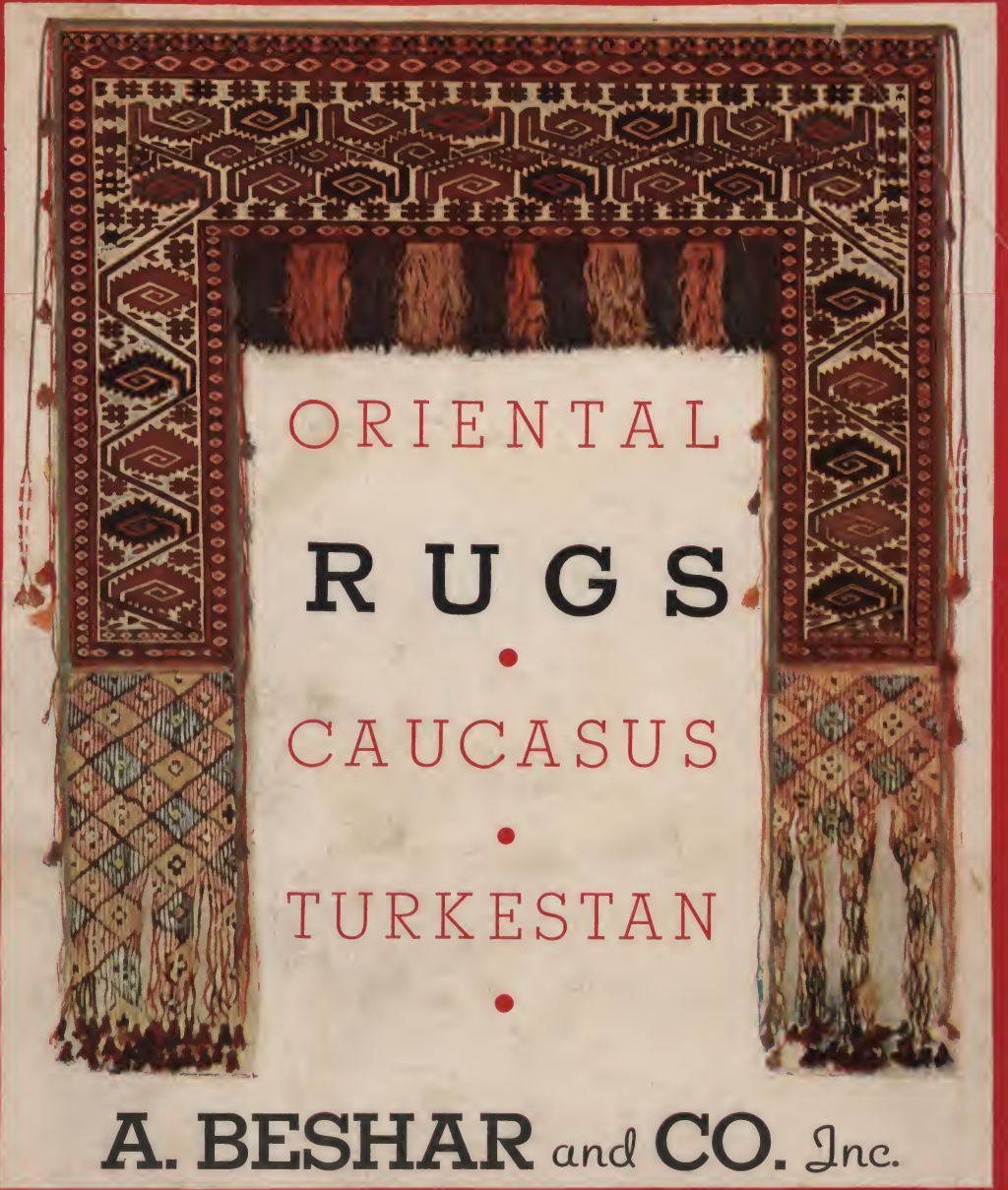




ORIENTAL

RUGS

CAUCASUS

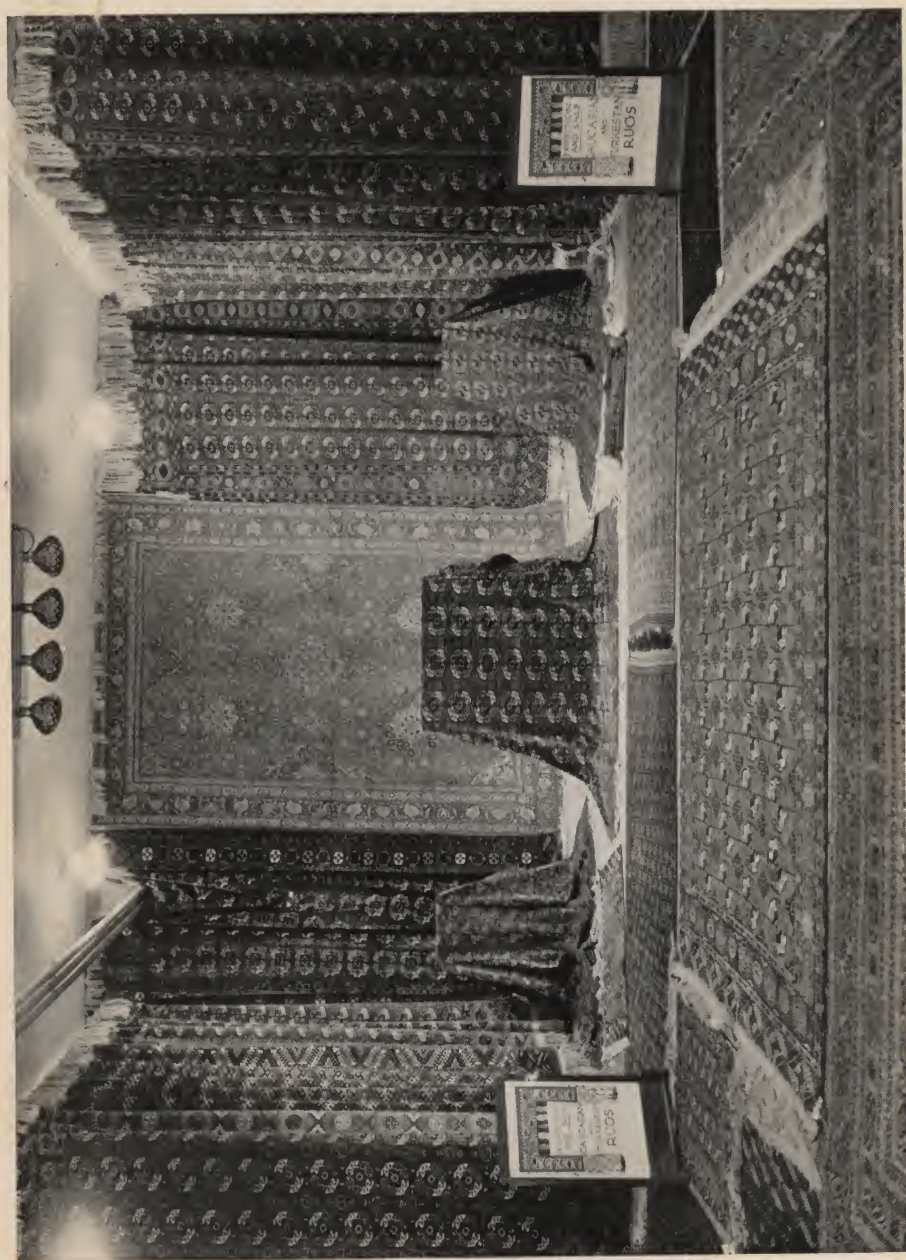
TURKESTAN

A. BESHAR and **CO. Inc.**

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NEW YORK CITY

Fine Rugs & Carpets since 1898



RUGS

OF THE CAUCASUS AND TURKESTAN



CAUCASIAN rugs originate in the Causasian isthmus between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. On its southern border lie Persia and Turkey. Rugged mountain ranges thrust snow-peaked sentinels higher than the Alps into a tropical sky whose northern horizon is the Great Russian Steppes. Scores of races and as many tongues live in the valleys and feed their shepherded flocks in the upper grasslands. Long before the Tartar invasion from the East numerous oppressed peoples found safe retreat in these mountains. For the most part unwritten, the history of the Caucasian peoples is an odd mixture of wave after wave of migration, broken here and there by age-old immurement in secluded mountain valleys.



- Luxurious abandon in scatter sizes as shown in the Hyastan Rug on the left and Armenian Shirvan on the right, lend Oriental splendor to a living room. A variety of weaves may be blended for effective floor decoration.

Turkestan rugs are made throughout a vast sweep of sandy, desert plain carved by oasis-like river valleys. Now called Soviet Central Asia, this ancient land was old when the golden hordes of Tamerlane subdued its grandiose cities—Samarkand, Bokhara, Tashkent, Merv, Ashkhabad. The endless plains of Siberia bound it on the North, the distant reaches of China touch it on the East, while the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs guard it on the Southeast. Its southernmost inhabitants carry on trade across the border with Persia and Afghanistan. Its western side faces the Causasus across the Caspian Sea.

Long famous for their brilliant texture, variegated design and luxurious pile, the better known floor coverings of these two regions were, for a time, all but unobtainable. Their import into this country, stopped by the war, was not resumed until 1929. The favor with which they have been received in the ensuing years is testimony of a public memory that has not forgotten the excellence of their design and the durability of their wool and dyes.

Since the war the people of the Caucasus and Turkestan have been part of the Union of



- A salutary design in floor decoration for the dining room—subdued but rich Bokhara in room size, 9x12.

Soviet Socialist Republics. The numerous nations of the Caucasus, each with its autonomous republic, are combined in the Transcaucasian Federation. Likewise organized on racial lines, the territory of Turkestan is divided into three main republics: Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan and Uzbekistan.

Upward of 240,000 women are engaged in the weaving of rugs in the Soviet Union. This ancient art was taken into consideration both by the first and second Five-Year-Plans. Without disturbing the native virtues and traditions of weaving, improvements were made in the working conditions of the weavers and preparatory work such as spinning and dyeing was assigned to newly constructed factories which left the weavers free to develop their art.

Weaving is done by hand, either in the home or in handicraft co-operative centers. The handicraft shops have instructors who teach the art to the unskilled and aid those who desire to perfect their skill. Marketing is handled by weaver's co-operatives.

Only high-grade carpet wool gives good wear and takes dyes well. Caucasian and Turkestan rugs are woven in yarn spun of wool derived from the stocky native herds which are shorn only during the Spring. The dyes are almost exclusively vegetable. Only a



few, such as indigo, are imported. The mixing and matching of dyes is an ancient art restricted to master dyers whose knowledge is an accumulation of centuries of trial and error. Decades of use only serve to add beauty to the luster of master-dyed carpet wool.

Design is the major element in determining the quality of oriental rugs. In the elaborate and varied designs of Caucasian rugs one can trace patterns resembling the weavings of ancient Babylon and Assyria. The flow of countless ages left deposits of strange historical influences in the deep valleys and high passes of the Caucasian mountains. As the various peoples were touched by this or that hand of history, the patterns of their handicraft underwent an accompanying transmutation. Thus in time their designs achieved a veritable symphony of oriental rug weaving. On the other hand, Turkestan rug designs spring from the nomadic wanderings of tribes on whom the cultural influence of other people made but small impression. For the most part simple in pattern, Turkestan rugs have the acknowledged virtue of symmetry and lend themselves amazingly well to the art of interior decoration.

Names of rugs are elusive. Places of origin, tribal names, cities often remote from present-



- Luxurious abandon in scatter size Bokharas for the sitting room. A variety of weaves may be chosen that nevertheless blend in the essential unity required for floor decoration.

day weaving centers, design, material and workmanship—all lend their appellations to rug designation.

For example, in Armenia rugs are woven in designs of numerous sources. Some patterns are from genuine ancient Armenian weavings which are known as Hyastan; others spring from old, important Caucasian designs, such as Perabedil-Burma; still others are borrowed from Kabistan (Kuba) and Shirvan patterns.

The representative Caucasian rugs are:
Armenian (Hyastan, Kuba, Shirvan)
Kabistan (Shirvan, Kuba, Baku)
Daghestan-Derbent
Kazak, Gandgea
Georgian Kazak
Soumak-Kashmir
Karabagh

The representative Turkestan rugs are:
Bokhara
Black or Pendi-Bokhara
Khachli-Bokhara
Saddle-bag Bokhara
Yomut
Afghan-Kerki (Khiva-Bokhara)
Samarkand (Mongol group)
Beshir

A beautiful assortment of antique and semi-antique rugs, both Caucasian and Turkestan, is available in a wide variety of periods, types and designs.



RUGS of the CAUCASUS

FAVORED in recent years among the export rugs of the Caucasus are the Armenian group. The Soviet Government has taken great interest in the weaving industry of this district, in which the weavers are largely women refugees from Turkish Armenia. A rug co-operative composed of some 40,000 women has been organized. Educational centers for the dissemination of the art of rug-weaving have been set up to train new workers and improve the skill of the old. The rising generation has been taught to work with modernized methods and in greater variety of design, thus outstripping the older weavers in speed and versatility—older women who have spent decades before antique looms.

The rug workers of Armenia work either in artels (co-operative centers) or in the home. All tools of the trade and necessary materials are supplied to them. Those who work at home



ARMENIAN-KUBA

devote themselves to rug-weaving during the time they are free from domestic duties. Those who work in the artels spend their days at the co-operative looms, their children being cared for meanwhile in nurseries and kindergartens connected with the artels.

Armenian rug patterns spring from ancient designs of Armenia itself, such as the Hyastan rug, which is a newcomer in the United States market; and from other Caucasian sources; Kuba, Shirvan, Perabedil-Burma and Hile. These patterns bear a resemblance to the ancient rug designs of the vanished culture of Assyria and Babylon.

Dyes are largely derived from vegetation: indigo blue, the sole imported color; doron, red from the roots of trees; sarigyul, yellow, and brown from the leaves and fruit of nut trees. Dyeing is done, for the most part, in modern plants, the colored yarn being supplied to the weavers.

Tushin, Donma and Agbaba wool from the sheep of the native hills, sheared only in the Spring, is the material used in spinning the yarn. This is done in newly built spinning mills, saving the weavers the added burden of making their yarn. Similarly, the washing and preparing of the yarn is done in factories under the supervision of rug specialists.



Sultan Badje—50 years of experience has made her one of the finest rug weavers in Armenia. The rug shown on the loom is called Hyastan.



Rug Map of the Caucasus and T

S . R .



Turkestan showing places of origin

Compactness of weave characterizes all Armenian rugs. The pile of oriental rugs is composed of individual lengths of yarn, knotted to the foundation and sheared to make the nap. The best Persian Kashans contain 32,000 knots per square foot, and Sarouks 26,000 knots, while Armenian rugs are frequently woven to a density of 39,000 knots per square foot. This means that a 3x5 rug contains over 500,000 knots, each tied and sheared individually and in consonance with the woven design.

Armenian rugs are usually made in "scatter" sizes, 2x4, 3x5 and 4x6 feet. To meet the demand, weaving has now begun on room size rugs.

No one knows when "Kubistan"—the region in the neighborhood of Kuba—was corrupted to "Kabistan". But it is by the latter name that rugs from this area are now known. The region, of which Kuba is the center, is now a part of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic which lies to the south of Daghestan.

These two republics contain the districts and cities whose names are given to Shirvan, Baku, Kuba, Daghestan, Derbent, Kazak and Gandgea rugs. Farther to the South lies the Autonomous Nagorni-Karabagh region in



KABISTAN

which are woven the well-known Karabagh rugs. The whole area from northern Daghestan to the Persian border is a rich rug region whose people are schooled in the centuries-old art of weaving.

The topography of the region is ideal for sheep culture and numberless herds graze on the mountain sides.

Kabistan—The following rugs belong to the Kabistan group: Kuba, Shirvan, Khela and Baku. Diminutive and symmetrical designs worked out in squares, rhomboids, triangles, hexagons, octagons, stars, diamonds and crosses, often connected by the traditional latch-hook *motif*, characterize their patterns.

These rugs are woven in densities varying from 15,000 to 22,000 knots per square foot. The dyes, as in Armenian rugs, are almost wholly vegetable. The best Caucasian sheep wool, Tushinka and Donma, is used. Sizes are usually “scatter”—4x6 feet.

Daghestan-Derbent—These Daghestan rugs are similar in design to Kabistan but have more medium density. The wool is largely Lesghin. “Scatter” sizes 4x6 feet are predominant.



KAZAK

Kazak—The designs on these rugs are exclusively of the medallion type, containing one to three medallions per rug. Karabagh and Lesghin wool is mostly used and density of weave is less than in the Armenian rugs. A square foot usually contains from 8,000 to 10,500 knots.



Karabagh—These rugs are extremely ancient in their design *motifs*. The old nobility of the Caucasus regarded them highly for floor coverings and as presents and dowries. The rich variety of design in flower fields and medallions with animal and bird themes mark them as a heritage from pagan times. Their density corresponds to that of the Kazaks. The wool is sheared from the famous Karabagh herds.



Georgian Kazak—In Georgia, production of rugs for export was started only 4 or 5 years ago. They are called Georgian Kazak because their design is often similar to Kazak and Gandgea weaves. Density of weaving is greater than in Kazak and Gandgea. Their specific virtue is the fact that they have a long pile, a feature well liked in the United States.



GEORGIAN KAZAK



RUGS of TURKESTAN

THE rugs of old Bokhara are traditionally famous. Rugs honored by this name have always enjoyed first place among oriental weavings. In olden times those women were favored who could make the best Bokharas, hence the old Turkestan legend: "Bokhara is famous because hundreds and thousands of girls there found happiness in life."

Turkestan is a vast country and not a few races compose its population. Samarkand, Bokhara, Ashkhabad, Merv and Tashkent were old cities when the golden hordes of Tamerlane swept in from the East.

The Bokhara family of weavings is noted for the symmetrical simplicity of its designs; basic colors are the rich Turanian red, natural black, white and yellow. These four colors, varied sometimes with other reddish hues, are combined in fascinating themes that



BOKHARA



Weavers in old
Turkestan.
Their home is a
felt tent or
YURT—their
brilliant carpets
acclaimed the
world over,

Turkoman
yarn spinners
at work in a
Yomut
village.



often rival the varieties achieved in other weavings of ten colors. Only vegetable dyes are used. Turkestan weavers work in patterns calling for densities of from 23,000 to 39,000 knots per square foot. The Sehna or Persian knot is used in weaving. Bokhara rugs vary in size from "scatter" to "room": 2x4, 3x5, 4x6, 6x8, 7x10, 8x12 feet, etc.

Pendi-Bokhara—These are similar to the dominant Bokhara types but differ in that in border and field the Turanian red is displaced by black. They are known to the American rug connoisseur as Black Bokharas.

Khachli-Bokhara—This type differs from the Bokhara only in design, being characterized by a central "cross" *motif*.

Saddle-Bag Bokhara—These rugs are highly regarded in Turkestan among horsemen. They are woven by Turkomans, Tekkes, Uzbeks and Tadjiks to cover their prized Arabian horses. There was a time when extravagant horse fanciers ordered such rugs with golden borders at a cost exceeding that of their fine horses.

Patma Chanum—One
of the first-rate Bok-
hara Rug Weavers in
Turkestan.



Inspecting a
newly woven
Bokhara at a
co-operative
rug center.

Yomut — These rugs, woven by Yomut tribes along the Caspian coast and in the reaches of the Kara-Kum Desert, resemble the Bokhara patterns but differ in density of texture and in larger scope of design.



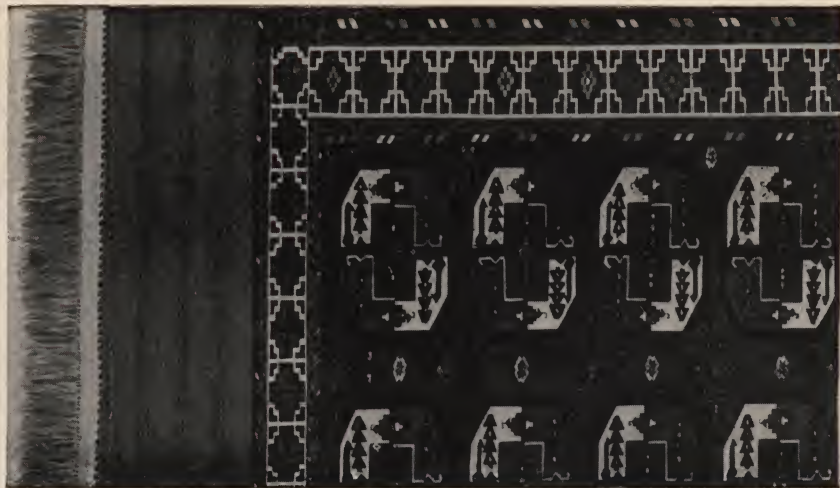
Samarkand — This school of weavings has a direct affinity with the Mongol group. Older Samarkands, often woven in silk, are highly prized. They are usually distinguished by a striking center medallion. The basic color is, as a rule, Mongolian yellow; the ground is most often blue or brown.



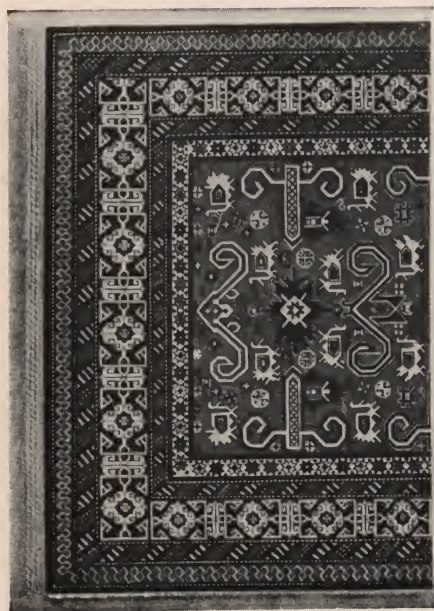
Afghan-Kerki — In the American market they are frequently referred to as Khiva-Bokhara. Strangely enough, these rugs originate not only along the Tadjikistan-Afghan border in the neighborhood of Kerki but also to the North along the southern coast of the Aral Sea near Khiva. Dominant colors are red, brown and black. Yarn is sometimes mixed wool and camel hair. Density corresponds roughly to that of Kazak rugs. Room sizes predominate, 7x10, 9x12.



Beshir — To the Beshir group belong also Kashgar and Chaldur rugs. Strong Persian influence is noticeable in most Beshirs. They are usually of "runner" size, 4x9, 5x11, 7x15 feet and larger.



AFGHAN



KABISTAN



PENDI-BOKHARA



KHACHLI-BOKHARA

[31]

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